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Speech by the Minister of Home Affairs, Environment and Education,  
Dominique Gantenbein at the Ambassador's Information Day, 14  
June 2017

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Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

"Change is the only constant." This old saying – sometimes misattributed to Heraclitus, sometimes to Charles Darwin – seems more timely today than ever.

Along with rapid social change, the demands on our education system are also changing. I believe it is the greatest challenge of education policy to master this process of change successfully, and it is also a priority area during this legislative term. With our Education Strategy 2025, we want to develop the strategic goals for the further development and guidance of our education system. Because we are in the middle of major changes, it is important to adopt a more strongly anticipatory strategy.

The curriculum is also currently being revised. Because in many areas, Liechtenstein's schools align themselves with neighbouring Switzerland, it is crucial to ensure the best possible points of contact with the Swiss education system. To continue to guarantee this alignment, our curriculum is being revised on the basis of the Swiss Curriculum 21, taking account of country-specific adjustments. With Curriculum 21, the 21 German-speaking and multilingual cantons have harmonised their schooling goals and adopted a six-year primary school structure, if they hadn't already. Because the length of primary school in Liechtenstein is only five years, the question of when to transition between schools also arises in Liechtenstein. In general, educational mobility and especially cooperation with neighbouring countries are essential for the Liechtenstein education system. For that reason, Excellencies, I advocate strongly for greater regional cooperation that will benefit the entire region.

Another goal is to systematically promote the STEM disciplines of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics in this age of digitalisation. Not only because of digitalisation,

but also as a general matter I believe that science, technology, engineering, and mathematics are of the utmost importance. The STEM disciplines are substantially responsible for progress, and the more we are able to deepen our expertise in those disciplines, the more competitive we become. It is a special concern of mine to promote STEM subjects in a way that arouses students' interest. Students should be able to experience STEM applications even beyond the classroom.

Apart from these developments, education policy can also make a contribution to the compatibility of family and work life by expanding the standardisation of instruction times at schools. This is a major concern in light of changing family and professional structures.

This concludes the comments on my work as Minister of Education.

As Minister of Home Affairs, security is at the top of my agenda. A critical consideration of security risks is becoming increasingly important. Security is a basic need of human beings, and it is an original responsibility of the State to ensure security and order. In the context of the changes in the security situation around the globe – especially in an era of more frequent terrorist attacks – cross-border, regional, and international cooperation is an important prerequisite for guaranteeing security.

The ongoing migration flow toward Europe also continues to pose major challenges. Liechtenstein intends to maintain its long-standing humanitarian tradition in asylum policy. People who are persecuted in their home countries or have to flee the chaos of war should be able to find the necessary protection in Liechtenstein, and recognised refugees should be integrated into society as quickly as possible. On the basis of our new asylum legislation that entered into force at the beginning of this year, asylum procedures must be carried out consistently, quickly, and fairly, but we must also rigorously prevent abuses.

In environmental policy, one of the major challenges will continue to be preserving the environment as a living space while promoting economic development. As a mountainous country, Liechtenstein is especially interested in how to manage our mountain region. It will

continue to be of the utmost importance for the development and preservation of our mountain region to proceed according to an integrated approach. Preservation of the natural bases of life for generations to come also depends on ecologically oriented agriculture, with production that is friendly to the environment and to animals. Natural living spaces and a high degree of biodiversity offer major benefits for our population in terms of protection from natural hazards and preservation of water supplies.

We intend to secure our high quality of life in Liechtenstein through sustainable development and careful treatment of our natural resources. In this way, Liechtenstein also wants to make a contribution to global efforts to protect the environment. It is important to me that Liechtenstein continues to take its responsibility seriously in international environmental policy and that it remains a reliable partner in the international context. My international environmental policy is guided by Swiss and European standards, in order to avoid unfair competition. At the same time, I believe it is important for Liechtenstein's special circumstances to be taken into account appropriately.